



## ideas

### HELP EMPLOYEES TRACK SUCCESS

How often do you see a sports stadium without a scoreboard? Probably never. But many staff play the game of business without knowing how they are doing. Are their departments and organisations winning? Is their performance lagging behind that of others? Clear up those mysteries by designing a feedback system that shows staff exactly how well they're performing. Here's some key points:

**Create a clear goal** and a good reason for pursuing it. Example: "I'd like you to improve customer service (goal) so we can reduce customer turnover (a good reason)." Discuss the goal with the staff member, agree on it and write it down.

**List ways you can track and measure progress** towards the goal. Examples: customer satisfaction surveys tracking customer turnover and following up on customer complaints to see if they were handled satisfactorily.

**Agree on several measures**, then assign responsibility for implementing them. Examples: Your staff might agree to keep notes detailing customer requests and how they are met. You could ask for a volunteer to create a form for tracking those requests and ask everyone to share the results at weekly staff meetings.

**Check the system periodically** to make sure it's working and to determine where you need to make improvements. Example: You might decide that the system is helping to reduce customer complaints but that the weekly meetings are too time-consuming. Changing to fortnightly meetings could be more efficient.

## inspiration

### ENLIST YOUR TOP BRASS

#### When Customer Complain They Want Attention

If they can effortlessly reach a manager who has the authority to address their concerns or solve their problems, they'll feel like they're halfway there. But if they must wait on hold for 10 minutes only to leave a voice-mail message, or if they cannot reach a living person with clout, they may give up in frustration.

Some organisations have discovered this simple truth when handling customer complaints:

The more powerful the executive who responds, the better. Most consumers feel important – and even honoured – if a department head or manager or CEO takes a personal interest in resolving a complaint.

So if you are in a senior position encourage complaints to come to you. Apart from being able to deal with them you will be gathering priceless information about both customers and your own organisation.

## fishing tip

### IDEAS FOR FINDING NEW CUSTOMERS

Study your competition. Advertise where they do. Promote yourself where your competition promotes themselves

## HOW TO STAND OUT WHEN YOUR PRODUCT DOESN'T

When your product or service is loaded with proprietary extras, it isn't difficult to differentiate yourself from your competitor down the street.

But how do you stand out if your product shares many features and benefits with competing products?

**Personalise:** Make your promotion personal by using direct quotes, testimonials and day-in-the-life narratives. Brief biographies can introduce the sympathetic element that allows prospects to project themselves into the experience you provide. Blending various elements can also be highly effective. Consider customer profiles that mix laudatory third-person biographies with direct quotes.

**Illustrate:** Bullet points won't do the job if they're the same bullet points your competitor uses. Instead, use evocative terms. For example, Brand X pears are "so big and juicy, you need to eat them with a spoon".

**Demonstrate:** Rather than focusing on the specifics of your product or service, show how your company delivers on its promises. This is where your Website becomes a critical tool: Offer anything from white papers and streaming videos to employee profiles and helpful tips. In other words, sell clients on the solidity of your company.

The most meaningful step in the process of making your product or business stand out is to enhance the quality of the relationship and experience.

How do your customers feel about doing business with you? How emotionally charged are they by the "experience"? How deep is the feeling of connection?

This is what the "customer experience" is about. It's a concept that once you have got your head around, makes it easy to find ways to make you stand out.

As we start to work through cost control it will be the proprietary extras that replaced by creating for each customer a very special personal experience with both the business and the product.

**The Point:** When ordinary features-and-benefits-based communications fail to distinguish your business from the others, it may be time to take your message somewhere else – into the heart of the customer experience.

## CUT DOWN ON WASTED WORDS... SHORTER WAYS OF WRITING THE SAME THING

With attention spans shrinking, writers and speakers face two great challenges: giving as much information as possible without exceeding your audience's ability to absorb it and doing so with as few words as possible. Here is a quick guide to cutting down words without losing the meaning.

<b>Instead of writing/saying</b>	<b>Write/say</b>
"In the amount of"	"For"
"In reference to"	"About"
"For the purpose of"	"For"
"With regard to"	"About"
"To be in a position to"	"To"
"With a view toward"	"To"
"If it is assumed that"	"If"
"With the result that"	"So"
"By the same token"	"Similarly"
"On a regular basis"	"Regularly"
"A large number of"	"Many"
"Until such time as"	"Until" or "When"
"To say nothing of"	"And"
"With the exception of"	"Except for"
"A sufficient number of"	"Enough"
"In the vicinity of"	"Near"
"It would thus appear that"	"Apparently" or "Probably"
"At this point in time"	"Now"
"In the very near future"	"Soon"

## DON'T BE IN TOO MUCH OF A HURRY TO HELP CUSTOMER

The question 'can I help you?' was once a golden rule of good customer service, but now days most people find it irritating.

Managing Director of KiwiHost New Zealand, Simon Nikoloff, said it used to be that all a person had to do was smile brightly and offer to help, to make a good first impression, but not anymore.

"The internet and a greater reliance on word-of-mouth recommendations have made modern customers more sophisticated and informed, to the extent that they only want help when they're ready for it."

"KiwiHost has been in the customer service business for more than 17 years and we can say with confidence that the last five years have seen a radical change in the way customers want to be treated – customers are no longer naïve, uninformed or 'shopping around' when they come into a business. They usually know what they want."

"While customers might still want help eventually, they will ask for it when they are ready. First moves by customer service staff can be seen as aggressive and pushy if the timing is not right."

"Our advice to customer service providers is to greet the customer and then 'disappear' until they look up and signal that they are ready for assistance – it means staff require more sophisticated and professional skills to match the consumer, if they are to avoid earning a frown from the customer. When a customer is ready to buy, they want it and they want it then and won't tolerate anything less," said Mr Nikoloff.

While people are taught not to judge a book by its cover, another challenge facing business is that it only takes an instant for people today to form enduring impressions of a person and a business.

It's literally a case of forget the 'seven seconds to make a good impression' rule.

Findings by Princeton University researchers ("First Impressions: Making Up Your Mind After a 100-Ms Exposure to a Face" by Janine Willis and Alexander Todorov. Psychological Science Vol. 17 No. 7) prove that individuals judge a person's attractiveness, likeability, trustworthiness, competence and aggressiveness in just one-tenth of a second.

"With this in mind, it is important to understand that ninety per cent of the first impressions that people form of each other are based on posture, facial expressions, tone of voice and appearance."

"Despite these new trends, a smile still cannot be beaten when opening contact with somebody and it too, takes only an instant to form. The essentials of good customer service remain unchanged."

"Our advice is to use positive body language that shows a willingness to serve. Smile, acknowledge the person and be open and friendly, but don't be in too much of a hurry to offer your help. You cannot do much more – or better – than that," he said.

# inspiration

## EDITORS INSIGHT

The other day I was waiting to meet an associate outside a building occupied by merchant bankers, accounting, legal and other professionals.

Through the entrance came a young woman well dressed in a navy blue suit, white shirt, smart shoes carrying a brief case. First impression? A professional woman well on her way to breaking through the glass ceiling.

She stopped briefly, reached into her bag and took out a packet of cigarettes, lit up and then continued (smoking) to walk down the street.

In less than 2 seconds my opinion changed. She was no longer a smart sophisticated executive who had demanded my attention. One small flaw had shifted me from admiration to just another person whose life was dominated by an unfortunate and addictive habit that one doesn't see publicly demonstrated amongst truly professional people.

The incident reinforces a major communication principal. Everything we do, say or look either adds or detracts from the first impression we create.

Elsewhere in this issue we have listed the twenty most destructive behaviours that we can exhibit.

Roger Ailes, President of Fox News in the US says in his book "You and the Message" those words themselves are meaningless unless the rest of you is in synchronisation with what you are endeavouring to say.

The total affect is "how others feel about you and how they respond to you". So don't forget "You are the Message".

## YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION

To score well during every "all important" first encounter, realise that each detail counts. You're not being frivolous or vain when you check yourself and mentally rehearse the major points you will discuss during a meeting. So why not check the other "bad habits" that contribute to poor first impressions. So beware of these 20 destructive behaviours:

- Interrupting repeatedly
- Dominating the conversation
- Inconsistent eye contact
- Standing in someone's space
- Taking a mobile phone call
- Letting your mobile phone ring
- Chewing anything
- Arriving late
- Being longwinded
- Risky humour
- PowerPoint that won't work
- Wrinkled clothing
- Checking your watch frequently
- Not listening
- Missing key points
- Poor table manners
- Boasting (exhibiting the "I" disease)
- Looking and sounding bored
- Complaining about anything
- Distractions, such as tapping
- Briefcase needing replacement
- Cluttered office